

where she gripped the wheel,
her face muscles twitching
like swimmer's cramps.
Our eyes met in the rearview mirror
& I shut up.

"They have no right,"
she said,
"They have no right to live
that way."

I found it hard to answer.

To All Who Would Know

-- a primer for Mel Lyman

I could tell you tales of broken nose
& twinkle toes
& non-chalant acceptance,

but rather let me say
that there is a hole in my kitchen wall
instead of my wife's face,
& I beat my child upon occasion
because of his existence;

and I drink to excess when I drink,
which is quite often ...

Margie & Arlene

lived just a few sand lots away,
were older than I was,
came by to play.

We'd go to the woods
& smoke,
I guess they were Tom Boys,
no one gave it much thought,
we'd smoke cigarettes
& show each other our things,
play doctor.

Once I broke Margie's head
pulling her on a sledge,
I remember running from the pond,
remember the puddle of blood that

shot rivulets thru the crusty snow,
the whole pond scarlet with Margie's blood
& me to blame.

Arlene was always smiling,
grew up to run away
with a cowboy
from the rodeo,
gave up the church
& said everything was
shit.

A family of misfits,
no one to lean on
not even each other,
dying in Brooklyn
& in silence,
a terror in their eyes
that no one cared enough
to see.

I Do Protest

Like time in the vice
Of man's ingenuity
And stars reduced
To chemics,
I protest.

I weep the rage of childless mothers,
Impatient to be full,
And I inhabit the focal point
Of sadness.

I protest the human mind
And I fear the loneliness of constellations.

The wind blows mellow and fog-grey
Through my limbo.

Cheyenne Friend

Bobby Bennett
was my best friend
we'd sneak out
at 2 a.m.
once his mother caught me
up against the hallway wall
we lived in what I guess
was a slum
a Cheyenne Mexican slum
a project
big blocks of building
with sandpaper walls.